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OPEN SPACE PUBLIC COMMENT:

I recently learned that the Open Space Council has not considered designating the lands adjacent to the First State National Historic Park as worthy of consideration as a Delaware resource area worth saving. Therefore I submit to the public record why this land actually ranks among the top most important ecologic, recreational, and historic resource in New Castle County. There are approximately 650 acres of unprotected land that lie just to the east of, and contiguous to Delaware's first and only National Park. Although it has not been included in the National Park, this land is an invaluable resource to those who live around it for a number of reasons.

1. It acts as a buffer to the National Park. First, it soaks up storm water before it hits the steep slopes of the valley, closer to the Brandywine River. Hurricane Run is already overwhelmed in medium to large rain events. Further development on the unprotected land would increase the storm water runoff load dumped into the National Park. Secondly, it acts as a buffer to Wilmington's drinking water supply - the Brandywine River. Having an additional 650 acres of riparian buffer is a crucial part in maintaining the integrity of Wilmington drinking water. Finally, it lightens the recreational load to the National Park. The unprotected acres contain trails, trail heads, parking areas, and most obviously additional open space! The loss of this land would increase the load to the National Park, burdening it with increased wear and increased parking issues, while decreasing the sanctity of being alone in open space - the very reason we escape to the park in the first place.
2. The unprotected land contains trails. As outlined above, the extensive trail system in Beaver Valley is not confined to what is now National Park. The trails run throughout Brandywine Creek State Park, the National Park, and the unprotected land. Loss of this open space would result in a significant loss of the trail system.
3. Contiguous open space is more important than isolated open space. Beaver Valley is a rare case of a large *contiguous* piece of open space near an urban area, which, as all ecologists know, is an invaluable ecologic quality. The plant and animal species that live on the land need a critical amount of open space to maintain an ecosystem. 500 acres of contiguous open space are much more valuable ecologically than two isolated 250 acre parcels.
4. Rare and endangered flora and fauna exist within the unprotected land. Both rare and endangered plant and animal species have been identified in Beaver Valley, including the American Chestnut and the Bog Turtle. In addition, streams within Beaver Valley have been identified as "exceptional value". The diversity of plants and animals inhabiting Beaver Valley are unmatched by any parcel of open space in New Castle County.
5. Dozens of historic structures exist outside the First State Historic National Park. History doesn't end at the borders of the National Historic Park. Dozens of historic structures,

many in pristine condition, sit on the unprotected land, that date back to the 18th century. In addition to historic structures, settlement patterns indicative of the time period can be identified. Beaver Valley is a rare glimpse into life during the late colonial period. For a county to have such a rare historic resource is a true gift that should be treasured and protected.

6. Any land that is currently agricultural (and seen as less valuable) can be reforested over time. Regardless of its agricultural designation, it is an important buffer from route 202 to the National Park.

It is of the utmost importance to consider this land in Beaver Valley as worthy of a Delaware resource area worth protecting.